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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Wednesday, November 25, 1936.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "DAY-BEFORE DOINGS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Listeners, I know you haven't time to listen to long dissertations or to write down recipes on a busy day like this. And I know that by this time you have planned your menu and finished your marketing, and you are up to your ears in welcoming relatives and eleventh-hour preparations.

So what I have to tell you today concerns only those important little matters that come up on the last day but mean so much toward the success of tomorrow's big meal.

First, an idea or two about the relish dish. If you have checked on your pantry supplies and find that you are low on relishes, or if you want something different and inexpensive in the relish line, here are a couple of last-minute possibilities. A raw vegetable dish can be good-looking and inexpensive if you use some of the typical old-time Thanksgiving vegetables, such as carrots and turnips, and even cauliflower. To make crisp carrot sticks for relishes, ^{in the} scrape the carrots, cut them in strips lengthwise, and put them in a covered dish/refrigerator overnight to crisp. Eat them with salt as you do celery stalks. You can prepare turnips the same way or in slices. As for cauliflower, wash the head and then break it into pieces. Put these away with the other vegetables in a covered dish to keep fresh until tomorrow. You can serve raw cauliflower "blossoms" just with salt, or with a bowl of Russian salad dressing.

Then, you can make a delicious sweet-sour, last-minute relish of raw cranberries, and an orange. Put 1 cup of raw cranberries and 1 orange, peel and all, through the food chopper. (Better set a plate under the chopper to catch the juice.) Sweeten the mixture to taste with either sugar or honey, and add a few grains of salt.

Probably you have creamed boiled onions on your Thanksgiving dinner menu. They are one of our traditional dishes for this occasion, and they should be especially popular this year when onions are so plentiful and cheap. (Remember my telling you about the great crop of onions this year?) One drawback to serving boiled onions when the house is full of company is the penetrating aroma, so likely to spread far and wide from the kitchen. So before the onions go in the kettle, you'll be wise to open the kitchen windows top and bottom to allow for all possible ventilation. And then be sure to leave the cover off the kettle. In that way the odor will pass gradually off with the steam into the air rather than in concentrated doses. You may have heard that a piece of bread in the cooking water will absorb the odor of strong vegetables like onions and cabbage. The foods people have tried this out but haven't noticed that it does any particular good.



Another drawback is the tears you get while you prepare the onions. The best preventive for onion-weeps that I know of is to do the peeling under water, either under a running faucet or in a deep bowl of water.

At a hearty meal like Thanksgiving, salad is often omitted. It is hardly necessary with so many vegetables and relishes. But if you have it, be sure it is light and appetizing with no hearty ingredients or rich dressing. A bowl of crisp greens and French dressing or a bowl of crisp lettuce and grapefruit sections will make an appetizing light salad for Thanksgiving. Grapefruit is a good choice for the thrifty, too. It is another of our big crops this year and the price is low. Save the grapefruit juice as you cut the sections for the salad. You can use that juice in place of lemon or vinegar in your French dressing. A bit of sugar in that dressing helps the flavor of a fruit salad like this.

Several letters lately have inquired why cracks appear in pumpkin pie. Right now seems the ideal time for answering this question. Let's avoid cracks in the Thanksgiving pie at all costs! Pumpkin filling that is too dry and an oven that is too hot are two causes of this trouble. Pumpkin filling, you know, is a custard mixture. And as you also know, custard, either in or out of pie, requires low or moderate heat for baking. If you use too hot an oven to bake your custard pie, the surface is likely to cook too firmly before the steam inside gets out. When that steam finally does escape, it breaks the surface and leaves a crack. Too dry a pumpkin mixture also is likely to cause a cracked, parched-looking pie.

Some cooks pour the pumpkin mixture onto the raw crust and bake both parts of the pie together. Other cooks take more time and bake the crust first, then add the filling, and bake again. The latter method is best if you like crisp rather than soggy bottom crust. Use a hot oven for baking the pastry shell. Then reduce the heat to moderate--that is 350 degrees Fahrenheit, and bake the crust and filling 30 minutes at this temperature--or bake until the filling sets.

While we're on the subject of pumpkin pie, here are a couple of suggestions for making it a bit different. Serve it with whipped cream or with both whipped cream and plum jam. You can spread a layer of jam over the top and then cover it with whipped cream. Quince preserves or quince jelly is also good with pumpkin pie. The very young generation at the Thanksgiving table who want dessert like the grown-ups but don't do so well on pie-crust may have individual baking dishes filled with the pumpkin custard mixture and baked along with the big pie. A bit of plum jam and whipped cream on top is all right for them, too.

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